

## TOM TURNER'S DUEL.

## A Story of College Life.

## CHAPTER IV.

## AN AWKWARD DILEMMA.

All this time I had been wondering if it was possible that I had seen Miss Tredennick before. I must have seen some one like her, I thought, but who? and it had just struck me that if Fairchild, whom I met a few evenings before, had been six feet high, Miss Tredennick was the kind of girl one might have expected his sister to be, when suddenly our game was brought to a close.

A piercing shriek came from the next room. We started to our feet and looked at one another. Then there came another and another.

"Good heavens, what has happened?" exclaimed Tredennick.

Then we all rushed into the next room. There we saw Miss Tredennick fallen on the sofa with her face buried in her hands, and evidently in a hysterical condition. Turner was standing beside her trying to raise her up.

"What in heaven's name is this?" cried Tredennick. "What has happened? What is the matter, Lucy? Tell me!"

There was no answer.

"Lucy darling," he asked again, "can't you speak? What is wrong? O, tell me!"

Then, in a voice choked with sobs, we heard her say:

"Ask Mr. Turner; he can tell you."

"What is it, sir?" said Tredennick, addressing our unfortunate friend. "What is the meaning of this? What have you done? Tell me at once."

"In a moment," answered Turner. "Just allow me to explain."

"Let me, at any rate, be spared your explanation, sir," Miss Tredennick, rising from the sofa. "Take me away, Fred," and Tredennick led his sister into the room we had left, saying to Turner as he passed:

"You shall hear from me, sir, about this." And the door was closed.

"Awkward business, this," said Bulfinch. "What in the world, Turner, have you been doing?"

"I am sure I don't know," he answered.

"Awkward indeed!" said Duke. "You have evidently grossly insulted Miss Tredennick, however you did it. I would not have believed it of you, Turner, indeed I would not; it's too bad. Of course there must be no dueling, or any nonsense of that kind. You will make an ample apology, Turner. You must say that you deeply regret what in a moment of infatuation you have done, and all that sort of thing. Tredennick is a first-rate fellow; and if the apology is such as a gentleman ought to offer in a case of the sort, I'll answer for it, he will accept it."

"Well, but just hear me," said Turner. "I did nothing, positively nothing. I'd be the last person in the world to insult Miss Tredennick. There has been some mistake."

"What, did you not attempt to—ah, ahem—to kiss her?" said Duke.

"Most certainly not," cried Turner. "Nothing of the kind. I give you my honor as a gentleman."

"O, then it's all right," said Duke. "I shall go and speak to Tredennick, as you see there has been some mistake, and a few words will explain all."

Saying this he knocked at the door and went in. As we stood silent by the fire-place, some very strange but indistinct sounds came from the next room.

"What's that?" said Turner.

"O, that's the noise," said Bulfinch, "that Tredennick makes when he has lost control over himself. He must be in a frightful rage."

In about five minutes Duke returned.

"I can't understand it all," he said. "Miss Tredennick is deeply offended, and evidently thinks you have given her good cause to complain of your behavior, and her brother is furious, simply furious! Well, now, it's rather an awkward question to put to you, Turner, and you must quite understand that I don't wish to interfere in the matter; but the fact is that lady says, or imagines, or—ah, well—that in fact you pressed her hand, or wrist, or something of the kind. Well, now, may I ask, is that the case?"

"Yes, it is," said Turner. "You see she asked me to feel her pulse."

"Whew!" exclaimed Bulfinch, his eyebrows going up. "That's odd, anyhow."

"Well, but," continued Duke, speaking with some hesitation, "that's not all, you see. You really must excuse me, Turner; I'd like to have this matter settled satisfactorily, if possible. Might I venture to ask if—if, ah—pray pardon me, it's not curiosity on my part, I assure you—if, ah—in fact Miss Tredennick is right in supposing you went so very far as to put your arm round her waist?"

"Well," said Turner, rather confused, "not exactly; that is to say—well yes, in a kind of a way I did. Allow me to explain."

"O, certainly," said Duke.

"What I mean is," he continued—"well, in fact she asked me to feel how her heart was beating."

"By George!" said Bulfinch, and he thrust his hands into his pockets, and began to whistle softly.

Duke remained silent.

"I am afraid this is worse than I thought it," he said, after a few minutes' consideration. "I really never knew anything so awkward."

Then he took a few turns up and down the room.

"One must do something," he said at last, "and I'll just go and try to explain the matter to Tredennick."

He walked quickly towards the door, but then hesitated, advancing more slowly, and evidently in doubt. Before he reached it, however, he turned and came back to the fire-place, where we were standing.

"I say, Bulfinch," he asked, "could you go in and explain it, do you think?"

"Faith, I could not," Jack replied. "I don't understand it a bit."

"O, come like a good fellow, you might try," he urged; but Bulfinch remained obstinate.

"Well, I'll make the attempt," said

Duke, "as I suppose I must," and he went again towards the door. This time his hand was on the handle, but he paused and again turned back, exclaiming:

"It's no go; upon my life, Turner, I can't do it. It's just the most awkward business I was ever in. You see," he explained, "I could only of course say to Tredennick, Turner acknowledges that he did squeeze your sister's hand and put his arm round her waist; but he asserts that it was at her request he did it, to find out how her heart was beating. That would seem rather odd, now, would it not? And Tredennick would be certain to ask: 'Why, then, did my sister shriek and go into hysterics?' In fact he would not believe it. And between ourselves, old fellow, very few would."

"Precious few, by Jove!" remarked Bulfinch, emphatically.

"I hope you don't mean to doubt my word Bulfinch!" exclaimed Turner, reddening.

"Come, now, old man," said Duke, "don't lose your temper. One affair of this kind is enough at a time, in all conscience, but just let me finish what I was saying. Even if your account is true, as of course it is, and that Miss Tredennick asked you to squeeze her wrist and all the rest of it, you see you can't well allege this by way of explanation. It would not be honorable, you know, or fair by the lady. It would never do to betray the—what shall I call it?—well, the very unusual—ahem—I may say, extraordinary confidence she reposed in you, and exculpate yourself at her expense. As it is, of course, what you have said will not go beyond ourselves; but you must quite see that her brother would be—and justly, too—even more indignant at the explanation than at the original offense."

At this moment Tredennick came to the door and called Bulfinch into the room. After a few moments the latter returned, and said:

"Tredennick is of the opinion that if Mr. Turner has not some explanation to give, there is but one course open to him; and he has asked me to ask as his second, which I have consented to do. He thinks, moreover—and I quite agree with him—that this affair should be kept strictly secret, as there is a lady in the case; and trusts, therefore that Mr. Turner will choose one of the gentlemen present to act in his behalf."

"This is most unfortunate," said Turner. "I can't apologize, for that would in effect say that I acted improperly, which would be untrue; and my explanation, as you have pointed out, would only make the matter worse."

"Why, yes, you see," said Duke, "there are cases when a duel is a gentleman's only resource."

"Yes, by George!" added Bulfinch, "that is exactly what Tredennick is saying, that this is a wrong for which the law of the country provides no remedy, or only one, which consideration for his sister makes it impossible for him to ob-

tain."

"It's well, old fellow," said Duke, "that dueling is so much in your line; for there is nothing else for it, I fear. I am to be your second, of course, I suppose? By Jove! when I thought the tools the other day I had no idea we should want them so soon!"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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